

vegetation including many of the large trees - a situation which appears to have caused a shortage in the number of the potential hornbill nesting sites. It seems reasonable to suggest that the birds utilizing the vacated bee barrels did so because their usual sites had been taken over by other birds. The use of these bee hives cannot, ultimately, be advantageous to the birds nor to the local bee keepers, as the nesting period which starts at the onset of the rains corresponds with the annual migration of swarming bees coming down to lower altitudes from the south and west (J.M. (J.M. Nightingale, pers. comm.).

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Andrew A.E. Williams, Box 23, Njoro, Kenya. Received 17 January 1978.

RESPONSES OF LITTLE BEE-EATERS TO A BLACK-THROATED HONEYGUIDE ENTERING THEIR NEST HOLE At approximately 1300 hrs on 15 December 1976, I was some 20 km north of Same on the main Korogwe-Moshi road in northeastern Tanzania, when my attention was drawn to the agitated flight and calls of three adult Little Bee-Eaters *Merops pusillus* and the flash of white outer tail feathers of a female Black-throated Honeyguide *Indicator indicator*.

The honeyguide flew to a hole in a sandy bank at the side of the road but initially did not fully enter the tunnel. It remained close to the entrance with its tail feathers protruding for 3 - 4 minutes. During this time the bee-eaters took turns in alighting beside the hole and tugging at the intruder's tail feathers, changing over four or five times. The honeyguide did not take advantage when the bee-eaters were changing over, and progress further into the hole was not hindered by them. When it did finally enter the tunnel it was followed by a bee-eater which, judging from the vigorous movements of its tail and rump, was probably continuing its attack. After a further 3 - 4 minutes the honeyguide emerged head first (when I noted the pink bill), was pecked ferociously around the head by two bee-eaters at the entrance to the tunnel; then, pursued by all three bee-eaters, it flew away. I lost sight of the four birds when they were some 300 m distant.

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J.F. Reynolds comments: The typical behaviour of a female Black-throated Honeyguide is to wait unobtrusively near a selected nest, quickly slipping in to lay an egg when the owner leaves, either after laying an egg or to feed. Mr Carter's observations suggest that the bee-eaters' tunnel was only about 40 cm in length whereas completed tunnels are seldom much less than 1 m long. It seems not unlikely that his honeyguide was investigating an unfinished nest, possibly 'assessing' when it would be ready to parasitize.